



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

has he not a right to conclude that such a creed only exists from the want of some zealous missionary devoting his best energy to convert its believers to a knowledge of something nobler, purer, and more in accordance with the higher aspirations of their nature? Let us take, for instance, a constant visitor at the music-halls, and ask him whether it is not one of the first requisites of a comic song that it should be comic. If he go to an entertainment to laugh, and does not laugh, he has a case against the manager of the establishment; and a sensible man would either express his disapprobation audibly, or seek some other amusement more in accordance with his wishes. Again, the lady at the evening party we have mentioned is at least justified in expecting some return for the labour she has bestowed in getting up so elaborate a piece of performance. It certainly may seem a sad alternative to be compelled to take refuge in good music; but the experiment is worth trying, seeing that so little interest is taken in the bad. A really genuine specimen of the art might attract the notice of two or three persons in a large assembly; and some pleasure would therefore at least be afforded to a section, however small, of the guests. In the case of the opera, it is notorious that the weakest music, although perhaps not the most popular, is certainly the most fashionable. A true lover of the art will crowd into the gallery to enjoy Beethoven, whilst a votary of fashion will sleep in a pit-stall through an opera by Verdi. If the holder of the pit-stall could purchase one half of the enjoyment experienced by the occupant of the gallery, he would no doubt be too happy to do so, even at double the amount he has paid for his stall; but he has long ceased to be a free agent in the selection of his pleasures: like the other instances we have mentioned, he has converted himself into a machine, and is acted upon by a motive power from without.

Upon those who have still sufficient independence to think a little for themselves, we especially urge the consideration of these truths. The object of music is surely neither to drive people away, to excite them to conversation, nor to send them to sleep; and if it can be proved that all these effects are constantly taking place as a natural consequence of the performance of bad works, why not give a fair trial to the good ones? At all events a new enjoyment is a sensation worth coveting; and there is always a certain pleasure even in mere contrast. If the higher class of music should act as a powerful opiate on the listeners, too, it must be remembered that the same persons might succumb equally to the effects of the lower class; and we think we may safely promise that the calming nature of good works will be the more likely to produce blissful and undisturbed dreams.

ROYAL ITALIAN OPERA.

GOUNOD's new opera *Romeo e Giulietta*, produced for the first time in this country on the 11th ult., considering the deserved popularity of its composer, was certainly one of the most interesting events of the season. A great deal is always said about the "temerity" of a composer who selects a subject already immortalised by a great poet; and we think it would be well if those who have already obtained a certain reputation were to weigh this matter well before they committed themselves for trial under such disadvantageous circumstances. That composers have succeeded in many of the settings of previously well-known poems and plays is no proof that they have been wise in attempting the task. Otto Nicolai's opera, founded upon Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, for instance, although full of beautiful music, is a failure as far as the principal character, *Falstaff*, is concerned: and even in Gounod's *Faust* the weakest part in the whole opera is *Mephistopheles*. What then has been gained by the selection of these subjects? Why force comparisons upon the minds of an audience, to the detriment

of works which experience has proved might have safely been judged on their own merits alone? It is evident that to develop Gounod's real strength, he must have a "garden scene"; and that the tenor and soprano must make love under the electric light, with a long and lingering farewell at the end; but why should the exquisite poem of *Romeo and Juliet* be cut into the conventional form of an operatic *libretto* for this purpose, when two lovers might be placed in the same situation in a story written especially for music; and consequently calling up no pre-conceived notions of poetical beauty which shall be detrimental to the composer? It is true that M. Gounod's love passages are most delicately conceived throughout his new work—and as *Romeo* and *Juliet* are the principal parts, he has thus far been happy in his choice of subject—but *Mercutio* is a signal failure; and the rest of the characters are equally destitute of any treatment which can recall to mind the wonderful individuality with which Shakespeare has invested them.

The story has been well adapted to the lyric stage by M. M. Jules Barbier and Michael Carré, although many liberties have of course been taken with the original text. In the version of the opera performed at the Paris *Théâtre Lyrique*, the overture includes a chorus of the principal characters on the stage, which is in fact a "prologue" to the work; but this has been most unaccountably cut out; and, as it now stands, the prelude to the opera, containing a most uninteresting and utterly misplaced *fugato*, is bald and uninviting in the extreme. The first act, a splendid ball-room scene, contains some light and pleasing music, without any particular meaning; the brilliant little waltz, exquisitely sung by Madlle. Patti, and encored, creating the first effect of the evening, although *Mercutio's* "Queen Mab" song is evidently intended to produce a marked impression. The instrumentation of this song is sparkling and fanciful; but the composition itself is laboured, and M. Gounod seems to have overtaxed his powers in the desire to give due effect to words already so well known. The "Madrigal," sung by *Romeo* and *Juliet*, is the first of the series of love duets flowing throughout the opera, and is treated by the composer in his happiest manner. It is replete with that grace and tenderness so observable in *Faust*; and proves without doubt that in these soft breathings of a youthful passion M. Gounod stands almost unrivalled. The *finale* of this act contains little worthy of notice; although we may mention that the thankless part of *Capulet* was well sung by M. Petit. In the second act we have the balcony-scene; and here, as may be imagined, occurs some of the best music in the opera. A cavatina for *Romeo* would have produced more effect had Signor Mario been in better voice; but he was hoarse throughout the evening, and it was an evident labour for him to sing at all. The duet between the two lovers, although full of charming passages, breathes little of the Southern warmth and impetuosity so exquisitely portrayed by Shakespeare; and notwithstanding that Madlle. Patti sung like a finished artist throughout this trying scene, the music was somewhat coldly received. Passing over the third act—which is chiefly remarkable for some lugubrious music (intended to bear an ecclesiastical character) for Friar Lawrence, a common-place quartet (encored), and a finale, which was so cut about as to lose all its effect—we come to the fourth act, in Juliet's chamber, which contains by far the finest and most spontaneous duet in the opera. This is in the composer's true style; and seems to show, as we have already hinted, that had he not been hampered with the reminiscences of Shakespeare's poetry, he would in many other portions have succeeded equally well. In this duet, too, occurs a lovely phrase which is often heard throughout the work, and always with renewed pleasure. The scene of the tomb in the fifth act is not remarkable for the happiness of its musical treatment; and indeed the death of the lovers is about as cold a climax as we remember in modern opera. The final duet is wanting in design; and although containing some excellent declamatory passages, produced little effect with a thoroughly wearied audience. Too much praise cannot be awarded to Madlle. Patti, who looked, acted, and sang the part of the loving and trustful *Juliet* to perfection. Of Signor Mario we have already spoken; and we must add that all the other parts were exceedingly well filled, Signor Cotogni's *Mercutio*, and Signor Bagagiolo's *Fra Lorenzo*, being especially worthy of commendation. The opera was excellently placed upon the stage; but in spite of the reputation of M. Gounod, the great success of the work in Paris, and the unquestionable merit of much of the music, we do not predict for it a lasting popularity with the English public.

CRYSTAL PALACE.

It is much to the credit of the large body of artists assembled on the occasion of the Festival Concert, on the 26th June, that they all gave their valuable services to the cause gratuitously. A gift so munificent should have been nobly imitated by the public; for it must be remembered that this artistic donation was voluntarily offered to the Restoration fund; whilst those who purchased tickets were merely paying for seats at one of the finest concerts of the season. So far then, unless we should hear of some handsome contributions to the fund, we must feel that the artists have taken the lead in a work which is so purely national that we should scarcely have expected even a formal public appeal to be necessary. In every respect the concert, as might be imagined from the vast talent assembled, was excellent. The first part, devoted to selections from Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, was magnificently rendered. The solo vocalists were Madlle. Tietjens, Mesdames Rudersdorff, and Sainton-Dolby; Messrs. Sims Reeves and Santley, and it will be unnecessary to dwell on the excellent manner in which all these eminent artists interpreted the whole of the music allotted to them. The choruses, too, were given in a most perfect manner throughout,